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LETTER DATED 8 JANUARY 1999 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF LEBANON TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

I have the honour to inform you that the Lebanese Government hereby requests the Security Council to extend the mandate of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), which expires on 31 January 1999, for a further interim period of six months, on the basis of the provisions of Security Council resolutions 425 (1978) and 426 (1978), in view of the fact that Israel continues to occupy Lebanese territory in defiance of the above-mentioned Security Council resolutions.

Israel's occupation of parts of southern Lebanon and the western Beqaa is also marked by daily violations by the Israeli military forces of Lebanese territory, airspace and territorial waters, well beyond the occupied areas.

Furthermore, the civilian population, living under Israeli occupation, suffers attacks at the hands of the Israeli occupying forces, as well as hardships and kidnappings by the score, while hundreds more have been detained for years in the infamous detention camp of Alkhiam and in Israeli jails without due process of law, in defiance of the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and related Protocols.

Lebanon hereby calls for the full implementation of the United Nations Security Council resolution 425 (1978), which called upon Israel to cease its military action against Lebanese territorial integrity and to withdraw forthwith its forces from all Lebanese territory.

Meanwhile, the continued deployment of UNIFIL represents the international community's commitment to the restoration of Lebanon's full sovereignty and territorial integrity, as set out in Security Council resolutions 425 (1978) and 426 (1978).

I take this opportunity to confirm Lebanon's commitment to the Middle East peace process in order to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

The Government of Lebanon considers that it is vital that the operational strength and capacity of UNIFIL be maintained, at least at its current level. The Government of Lebanon avails itself of this opportunity to pay tribute to the UNIFIL command, administrators, troops and troop-contributing countries for their noble efforts and sacrifices made in the cause of the implementation of its mandate.

Furthermore, the Government of Lebanon wishes to express to you, Mr. Secretary-General, and to your assistants its deep appreciation for your tireless efforts, which contribute to the valuable presence of UNIFIL in southern Lebanon.

I would be grateful if you would have the present letter circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Samir MOUBARAK
Ambassador
Permanent Representative